

How to Read Your Tires

Our tires can only support us and our vehicles safely if we keep them in good condition and properly inflated. Inadequate tread is not safe or legal, and over or underinflated tires reduce traction, accelerate tire wear and affect steering, braking and fuel economy.

Pressure should be checked in all tires monthly (including the spare), and before long trips. Check cold tires using the manufacturer's pressure recommendation, which can be found in the owner's manual, on the doorjamb, or inside the glove compartment, trunk lid or fuel door. Monitoring systems on newer cars provide a warning when pressure is severely low, but do not replace routine monthly checks. If you see the warning light while driving, grip the wheel firmly in case of a blowout, pull over slowly and safely to investigate, and change the low tire or call for service.

To check tread depth, place a quarter into several tread grooves across the width of each tire. If the top of Washington's head is exposed at any point, you should replace the tires. Although tread is legal in Vermont using the old penny method to measure 2/32, the slightly higher quarter standard (4/32) is a safer choice.

Other symptoms to watch out for are pulling to one side, vibration or difficulty steering in the vehicle, and wavy marks, cuts, snags, cracks, bumps, bulges, knots, exposed cord or uneven wear on the tires. Have any of these conditions checked out right away. It's the safe thing to do.

